

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ANDREW CUTLER
Editor

WYATT HAUPT JR.
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Smarten up state spending

When people spend other people’s money, they can be less than finicky. And so it seems with workers at the state of Oregon.

For instance, the state bought 23 Xerox printers for \$1,461.78. A state audit found a better deal that could have saved the state more than half that amount.

The state bought 58 copies of some statistical software for \$12,694.42. A state audit found a better deal that could have saved \$6,079.52.

And the state bought four licenses for some database software for \$119,649.11. The same state audit from December 2018 found a better deal that could have saved the state \$107,017.51.

Yikes.

Those are egregious examples. We did pick them from the audit to highlight the shocking savings that the state could have made if it spent money more carefully. Of course, state workers may not always have the time to seek out a great deal on every purchase, and state purchas-



Capital Press Photo/Mateusz Perkowski, File

Under a five-year contract with Periscope Holdings, the OregonBuys Marketplace will standardize purchasing across all the state’s agencies, from procurement to payment, giving Oregon a view into its buying activity.

ing requirements can interfere with getting the cheapest price. The state audit found, though, the state could have saved between \$400 million and \$1.6 billion during the 2015-17 bien-nium based on \$8 billion in procure-ments during that time.

We’d like to be able to tell you

that’s all fixed now. We can’t. But we can tell you the state is moving in what could be a positive direction in one area — purchases by state and local governments that are too big to put on a credit card.

The state has a contract with Peri-scope Holdings, an Austin, Texas,

company, to build a new statewide procurement system, according to Governing magazine. The platform called OregonBuys Marketplace is scheduled to gradually go live across government in 2020. There are sim-ilar systems in Illinois, New Jersey and Massachusetts. If it works right, it will replace what’s called ORPIN, which is the system the state and local governments use now.

Buying stuff for the state gets complicated, because there are many legal requirements. The hope is that the system will keep that in the back-ground and government workers will be able to shop for goods more easily. It will automate a lot of the work. It might make it easier for smaller ven-dors to compete for state dollars. And the state should be able to better track spending and purchases and manage that data.

Will the cost of the OregonBuys be recouped in savings? We hope so. Will it fix the fundamental problem that people aren’t as careful when they spend other people’s money? No. But it should enable the state and the public to better monitor it.

OTHER VIEWS

Catholic priest had every right to deny Joe Biden communion

Whenever a Catholic runs or is nominated for public office, he or she has to endure a now-fam-iliar vetting process revolving around one thing: abortion rights. To make pro-gressives happy, candidates must follow the Mario Cuomo script of “I am person-ally opposed but I will not impose my will on other people.”

But they also have to be careful not to alienate conservatives by downplaying their faith and morality. It’s a very hard needle to thread, and a lot of people fail miserably at it. Rendering unto Caesar sometimes means deny-ing God, and vice versa – some-one’s right not to have religious beliefs imposed on them must be balanced against another person’s right to practice his or her faith.

Americans saw this conflict play out for the umpteenth time last month, when a Catholic priest in South Carolina denied Joe Biden communion. The former vice president was attending mass at Saint Anthony Catholic Church in Flor-ence, and Rev. Robert Morey denied him the Eucharist, stating later that a “public figure who advocates for abortion places himself or herself outside of Church teach-ing.” He added that he would pray for Biden.

For his part, Biden refused to dwell on the incident other than to say “I’m a prac-ticing Catholic, I practice my faith” and that this was his personal life.

Social media lit up with people who were angry that Biden had been pub-licly shamed. Some felt that the Reverend Morey was out of touch with changes in the church, and that support for abortion rights was not necessarily a moral evil.

But Canon Law — specifically Canon 915 of the 1983 Code — is clear: “Those ... who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin, are not to be admitted to holy communion.”

Abortion is still considered one of the gravest sins in the church. Joe Biden is a strong proponent of Roe v. Wade, in June dropping his support of the Hyde Amend-ment and its ban on federal funding of abortion.

That being the case, the church is right to deny him communion. As I said before,

some think this is intolerant. Jesuit Father James Martin tweeted in Biden’s defense: “Denying Communion to politicians, Democrat or Republican, is a bad idea. If you deny the sacrament to those who sup-port abortion, then you must also deny it to those who support the death penalty. How about those who don’t help the poor? How about ‘Laudato Si’? Where does it end?”

But Pope Emeritus Benedict, still active, had the answer: “Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abor-tion and euthanasia ... there may be a legiti-mate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death pen-alty, but not however with regard to abortion and euthanasia.”

That pretty much settles it from a religious perspective, coming as it does from a Pope. Biden was rightfully denied the sacrament. Rev. Morey was not inappropriately imposing his beliefs — he was following the letter of the church.

Archbishop Charles Chaput, one of the most eloquent observers of religion in the public sphere, provides a much richer view of how to reconcile public and private selves than Cuomo’s “I will not impose” standard:

“The church claims no right to domi-nate the secular realm. But she has every right — in fact an obligation — to engage secular authority and to challenge those wielding it to live the demands of justice. In this sense, the Catholic Church cannot stay, has never stayed, and never will stay ‘out of politics.’ Politics involves the exer-cise of power. The use of power has moral content and human consequences. And the well-being and destiny of the human person is very much the concern, and the special competence, of the Christian community.”

Chaput’s gracious stance far exceeds the rank hypocrisy of those who want to keep religion out of politics, and yet lord politics over religion. If you don’t want us telling you how to write your laws, don’t tell us how to manage our sacraments. Deal?

Christine Flowers is a syndicated free-lance columnist.



CHRISTINE FLOWERS
COMMENT



GARY MCCOY
CAGLECARTOONS.COM
GARY@GARYMCCOY.ORG

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. PRESIDENT

Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
whitehouse.gov/contact/

U.S. SENATORS

Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office: 541-962-7691

Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Greg Walden
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

GOVERNOR

Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582

REPRESENTATIVES

Greg Barreto, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-38
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

SENATOR

Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-423
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

Send letters to the editor to editor@eastoregonian.com, or via mail to Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801